

## Fleet Hospital 8 returns to Naval Hospital Bremerton

The last of Fleet Hospital Eight's medical and support staff returned in two groups – the first on July 20 and the second on July 24.

A group of about 170 arrived at McChord Air Force Base in Tacoma, Wash., on July 20 before making the ride by military bus to Naval Hospital Bremerton. The medical heroes arrived at the Bremerton hospital at about 10:30 p.m. to the cheers of delighted family and friends, and the lights and cameras of two Seattle TV stations.

The second and final group of about 100 arrived at McChord, where approximately 35 personnel belonging to Naval Hospital made the trek by bus to Bremerton, arriving at the hospital at about 9:15 p.m. The remaining 65 went on to various commands on the West Coast.

FH8 was composed primarily of medical and support personnel from Fleet Hospital Bremerton, which is manned by Naval Hospital Bremerton staff. Many positions vacated by the FH8 deployment were filled by mobilized Navy reservists from throughout the U.S.

Medical and support staff for FH8 also came from about 20 other commands, including Navy hospitals, medical and dental clinics, and mobile construction "Seabee" units throughout the U.S.

FH8 deployed Feb. 16 to provide medical treatment for sick and injured Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. An initial group of 255 returned to Bremerton on May 14 before the FH8 was deactivated in mid July.

In its five months of duty, FH8 cared for almost 1,400 inpatients and performed more than 250 surgeries, said Capt. Pat Kelly, FH8 commanding officer.

FH8 staff initially built a 116-bed Expeditionary Medical Facility and later transitioned to a larger, more capable 250-bed Fleet Hospital.

Kelly said FH8 was the first, largest and longest deployed fleet hospital in Navy Medicine history.